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# **Dilemmas of sexual citizenship: a critical social psychological analysis of Civil Union law representations in Greek Cypriot newspapers**

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In 2015, the introduction of the Civil Union (CU) law represented a major legal development for the largely heteronormative and patriarchic Cypriot society. The law evoked social debate around sexual rights and broadly around sexuality. Until then, discussions around LGBT+ rights and issues were largely absent from the public sphere (Tryfonidou, 2017).

Rights related to legal forms of partnership, such as same sex marriage (SSM) or civil partnership/union (CU), are part of sexual citizenship (Brandzel, 2005; Josephson, 2005; Richardson, 2017). As a concept, sexual citizenship developed out of feminist critiques of the 1960s and beyond and the LGBT rights movement. It has since been employed to study a range of sexuality-related rights as part of citizenship status, exposing the heteronormative understandings of existing models of citizenship (e.g. Richardson, 2004, 2017; Plummer, 2001; Weeks, 1998). We argue that the debate around CU in Cyprus reflects understandings of sexual citizenship. In this paper, we seek to identify the meanings that underpin the construction of CU in the press and how these are implicated in defining the boundaries of sexual citizenship. We frame these as debates over citizenship to highlight the political struggles involved in these processes of construction.

In doing so, we advance a critical social psychological approach to sexual citizenship. This approach seeks to understand how citizenship is constructed, negotiated and contested, not at the level of citizenship regimes and state institutions as it is usually studied, but from the perspective of citizens themselves (Andreouli, 2019). This approach examines the micro contexts within which citizenship is discursively constituted and the ideological resources in which these constructions of citizenship are anchored. Ideologies contain themes and counter themes, that is, ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988), which are drawn upon to construct meanings about sexual citizenship rights at public debates.

Despite the important role that traditional media play in the reproduction of invisibility, inequalities, and stereotyping of the LGBT+ community (e.g. Gross, 2012; Lister, 2002), their role in constructing meanings around sexual citizenship remains understudied. Representations of SSM and CU have largely been studied through quantitative media framing analysis (e.g. Johnson, 2012; Pan, Meng & Zhou, 2010; Warren & Bloch, 2014), with some exceptions taking a critical discursive perspective (e.g. Goodwin, Lyons & Stephens, 2014; Jowett & Peel, 2010; O'Connor, 2017). This body of work, as a whole, concerns mainly the Anglophone world and only in passing examines the link between representations of SSM/CU and sexual citizenship. However, this is an important link to study because the ideologies that underpin media representations of SSM/CU have implications for the ways that LGBT+ rights are claimed or denied in the public sphere, and consequentially, they contribute to enabling or constraining citizenship.

Newspapers are domains of meaning-making that neither stand at the macro-state level, nor at the lay level but tend to shape public opinion with the actions or views of decision makers (Hall et al., 1978). Especially opinion articles, which we

study, are the least regulated newspaper genre as they do not abide by professional demands for journalistic impartiality. By contrast, they represent points of view of readers or journalists who aim at to “speak to power” (Hall et al, 1978, p. 120). Therefore, by studying the ways that sexual citizenship is constructed in opinion articles, we can explore the different ideologies and contestations around LGBTQ rights.

The location of our study, Cyprus, is of particular interest as it cuts across different types of boundaries. It is ethnically divided and positioned, geographically and culturally, between the East and the West and between Europe and non-Europe. The precarious relationship of Cyprus with West-centered notions of Europeanness is due to the fact that it accessed the EU in 2004 with two expectations, to re-unite under a federation and confirm its Europeanness (Argyrou, 2010). For the Greek-Cypriot community, the focus of this study, Europeanization equaled modernization (Trimikliniotis, 2001). EU accession catalyzed developments towards decriminalization of (male) same sex relationships and the introduction of the 2015 CU law. These political developments were supported by LGBT+ activists but they also met severe opposition by influential institutions like the Orthodox Church and by some political elites that view them as a threat to Cypriot traditional values (Kadianaki, Panagiotou, Avraamidou, Pagkratidou & Ioannou, 2018).

### **Citizenship and psychology**

The study of citizenship is a key focus for social scientists interested in politics. Social psychologists’ interest in citizenship has so far been rather peripheral (Stevenson, Dixon, Hopkins & Luyt, 2015). Nevertheless, relatively recent publications (Barnes, Auburn & Lea, 2004; Condor, 2011) from a broadly social constructionist approach (e.g. Gibson & Hamilton, 2011; Kadianaki & Andreouli,

2015; Sapoutzis & Xenitidou, 2017; Figgou, 2016) have begun to develop a critical social psychological approach to citizenship (Andreouli, 2019). This approach, which is adopted in this paper, focuses on the ways that the concept of citizenship is constructed from the bottom-up. In particular, it examines the perspectives of social-political actors themselves in local discursive contexts and on how such constructions draw upon, reinforce or challenge broader ideological and cultural resources. It therefore addresses a notable gap in citizenship studies, which have been dominated by an emphasis on state institutions and citizenship regimes.

The concepts of lived ideologies and ideological dilemmas (Billig et al, 1988) are particularly useful for the critical social psychological study of citizenship. Ideology is conceptualized as a network of commonsensical ideas, which are rooted in cultural and political history (e.g. liberalism's connection to the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment), but they are also "lived" in the here-and-now of everyday life. Social actors make use of ideological themes in their everyday lives to make sense of the world around them, their place within that world and their relations to others. These ideologies contain ideological dilemmas: themes and counter-themes (e.g. individualism and collectivism in liberal thinking) which provide lay thinkers with the resources for engaging with different perspectives and with each other. The concept of ideological dilemmas puts contestations and dilemmas over the meanings of rights at the core of the study of citizenship. As Barnes, Auburn & Lea (2004, p. 189) argued: "It is something of an oversimplification to assume that certain entitlements unproblematically flow from establishing oneself as a citizen... what really matters is the very process of negotiation, contestation and dialogue in which these claims and identities are mobilised".

Following a critical social psychological approach, we approach sexual citizenship not as a status, but “as an everyday practice of invoking one’s rights and making rights claims that position oneself and others as (legitimate) political subjects but which may also exclude others from political life” (Andreouli, 2019, p.7).

### **Sexual citizenship**

The concept of sexual citizenship developed out of feminist critiques of citizenship and LGBT+ movements (Marshall, 1950), which drew attention to the male-centrism of models and practices of citizenship and the implications it had for women’s exclusion (Lister, 2007). Scholars (e.g. Lister, 2007; Young, 1989) called for the pluralization of citizenship to account for diverse sets of political claims, by different political actors, including claims that were traditionally seen as non-political and private, such as sex and sexuality (Weeks, 1998). Sexual politics of the 1990s also played a crucial role in striving for equality and full citizenship status of LGBT+ on the basis of a ‘normal’ (versus a pathological or deviant) identity (Richardson, 2004), despite some opposition from feminist and queer activists for supporting a Western liberal idea of the individual sovereign subject (Sabsay, 2012).

Sexuality became progressively a key concern in the debates around citizenship and relevant academic work proliferated. The concept of sexual citizenship was used in sociology (Evans, 1993), legal theory (Robson, 1992) geography (Bell & Binnie, 2000) and political theory (Phelan, 2001). Most concur in exposing the heterosexual assumptions that underpin understandings and access to citizenship, a state of affairs that leads to and maintains inequalities (Richardson, 2004, 2017). Richardson (2017) argues that the legitimate citizen and the acceptable and appropriate expressions of sexuality have been defined by normative heterosexual ideas, excluding lesbians and gays and turning them into second-class citizens.

The concept of sexual citizenship has been central in debates around SSM within and outside academia (Richardson, 2004). Radical queer activists and theorists, together with some feminist movements, argued against SSM on the basis that marriage represents historically a mechanism of assimilation and oppression because it institutes heteropatriarchy and unequal social power relations (Brandzel, 2005). Others saw it as a way to transform the marriage institution from within by eliminating gender inequality and rupturing its heteronormativity (Stoddard, 1997). Among other arguments in favor of marriage equality were the resolution of practical, technocratic issues, issues of recognition (Brandzel, 2005; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2004), justice and equality (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2004; Peel & Harding, 2004). Arguably, “critics and advocates alike within the queer community see access to marriage so clearly in terms of citizenship” (Josephson, 2005, p. 274).

Within this debate, Civil Partnership/Union schemes also received attention. In some countries, such as Cyprus, CU law recognizes same sex relationships but not parenthood rights. Elsewhere, CU schemes grant the exact same benefits and responsibilities as heterosexual marriage but are only available for same sex couples. Kitzinger and Wilkinson (2004, p. 133) argued that: “The difference in nomenclature [civil partnership/union vs marriage] functions to achieve a symbolic separation of same sex couples from the hallowed institution of ‘marriage’”. This, for Brandzel (2005, p. 197) serves to “expose the paradox of citizenship itself, as both a universalizing and exclusionary device”. For some, this coexistence of legal schemes is itself discriminatory, while for others, this discrimination is only legal (Ellis, 2007) and since, in the social terrain, civil union/partnership laws and marriage are perceived as being the same, they have the potential to transform the marriage institution. Still, for some activists, maintaining a distinction between marriage and

civil partnership allows to both grant legal recognition to same sex couples and to criticize marriage as a patriarchal institution (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2004).

The controversy around legal recognition of same sex couples is reflected in the media and in the experiences and views of same sex couples. Same sex couples appear ambivalent concerning the legal recognition of their partnerships (Dodovan, Heaphy & Weeks, 1999; Jowett & Peel, 2010; Rolfe & Peel, 2011), as they have to find their position between their claims for recognition and equality and the danger of assimilating into a heteronormative and patriarchal institution. Media representations of SSM/CU are largely governed by heteronormative assumptions of marriage and parenthood, normalized by appeals to nature and biology, as research in the US, Ireland, UK and New Zealand shows (Cole, Avery, Dodson, & Goodman, 2012; Goodwin, Lyons & Stephens, 2014; Jowett, 2014; Jowett & Peel, 2010; O'Connor, 2017; Wilcox, 2003). The appearance of a discourse of tolerance, equality and human rights has opened the “boundaries of ‘legitimate’ citizenship” (Goodwin, Lyons & Stephens, 2014, p. 827), but marriage still remains a fortress of heterosexual privilege.

Another strand of sexual citizenship research explores the relationship between sexuality and nationalism. Scholars have drawn attention to the masculine identity of the prototypical citizen (Nagel, 1998) and the exclusion of homosexuals as threatening the social order and the survival of the nation (Canaday, 2011). More recently, authors have emphasized that the recognition of sexual minorities as equal citizens is used in Western contexts as a rhetorical device to establish a dichotomy between Western tolerant, civilized and progressive states and Eastern, intolerant, uncivilized and backwards states. Puar (2007) coined the term “homonationalism” to show particularly how sexual rights discourses, coupled with celebratory narratives about Western progress and secularization, have played into anti-multiculturalism and



anti-Muslim politics in the US and Europe (Mepschen, Duyvendak & Tonkens, 2010; Puar, 2007).

Overall, while sexual citizenship has opened the concept of citizenship to include a more diverse range of rights' claims, this has not always advanced a progressive political agenda. By contrast, the concept of citizenship is entangled with ideas of heteronormativity, patriarchy and nationalism. This ambivalence makes sexual citizenship a multi-dimensional and contested concept. It is these complexities of meaning that this paper seeks to explore in media representations.

## **Method**

Media play a central role in the re-construction and dissemination of culturally dominant ideologies and versions of citizenship (Wilcox, 2003). They can help to naturalize social thinking (Höijer, 2011), but also to contest meanings around debated issues such as sexual orientation (Meyers, 1994). It is crucial to understand how media deal with contradictions of meaning (Fuchs, 2016), how they influence the ways that different aspects of sexual citizenship are understood by the public (Maree, 2017), and subsequently, how they contribute to the justification of relevant policies and practices. It is for these reasons that mainstream newspapers constitute an important social arena for the study of sexual citizenship.

The study analyses four daily Greek-Cypriot newspapers between July 2011 and December 2015<sup>1</sup>, a period covering the CU Law parliament discussions and vote. The selected newspapers represent different standpoints in the political spectrum: *Haravgi* is a left-wing newspaper, *Politis* is liberal, particularly on economic issues, *Fileleftheros* is not aligned to a specific party but is considered a centrist paper, and *Simerini* is a right-wing newspaper. They are all part of larger media organizations linked with political and economic interests.

We focused on articles about the CU law and related topics, such as marriage and partnership. To collect data, we conducted a search using related keywords in Greek: civil partnership, civil union, legally recognized partnership, marriage, free cohabitation, recognition of same sex partnership/relationships. With the assistance of a media monitoring company, the search resulted in 235 articles. We categorized articles into news and opinion (Hall et al, 1978), but focused only on the 93 opinion articles, which explicitly stated the author's views on the topic. Opinion articles were written by media staff (e.g. journalists), members of the public, or representatives of organizations.

Opinion articles were categorized in three groups: (a) Primary, when CU law was their dominant topic, (b) Secondary, when CU was a prevalent topic but not primary, and (c) Reference, when CU was only referenced without explanation. Reference articles (N=6) were excluded as irrelevant. Of the remaining, five articles were replicates of articles that appeared more than once in different newspapers. This process resulted in 82 articles for qualitative analysis. The article extracts, quoted in the analysis were originally in the Greek language. They were translated in English and then back translated by the authors, to ensure the quality of translation.

To analyze the data, we first used thematic analysis (TA) and then critical discourse analysis (CDA). TA (Braun & Clarke, 2013) aimed at identifying central organizing concepts that referred to the ways that CU was constructed in the articles. Critical discursive analysis (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001) aimed at identifying the ideological resources and dilemmas that underpinned the constructions of CU and citizenship through a fine-grained analysis of the meanings of each theme. The process of TA involved first coding the 82 articles. Four researchers read independently and familiarized themselves with all articles, isolating ideas of interest

and discussing convergence and divergence of their perspectives. They then cooperatively developed six codes to label these ideas: legal issues, practical issues, societal progress, societal decline, im/morality, ab/normality. The first theme of our analysis was the central organizing theme of rights, unifying the data under the codes of legal and practical issues. The second theme was about the new legislation as progress and it contained the two codes of societal progress and decline. Each of the two themes consisted of arguments for and against the legislation. Data under the codes of ab/normality and im/morality did not organize around a central theme but were regarded as ideological resources in the CDA analysis that followed.

Taking a critical discursive approach, we then analyzed each extract of the two themes. This involved a close reading of the text to examine the ideological assumptions that underpinned the construction of CU. Through this analysis, we identified various ideological resources (e.g. nationalism, modernity, equality, privacy and public recognition, sameness, diversity) in arguments for and against CU. These ideological resources led us to identify two broad ideological dilemmas surrounding the debate. These are discussed in the paper's final section.

### **Analysis**

The discussion on the CU law revolved around two themes of oppositional arguments. The first theme entailed primarily rights-based arguments about the question of whether CU protects universal rights or introduces special rights – the latter being seen as either undeserved or as creating inequality. In the second theme, CU law was constructed as a desired societal progress or as a decline and national degeneration.

#### ***Universal rights or special rights?***

Authors supporting the legislation framed it as a rights issue and discussed primarily legal regulation of practical issues, such as financial matters, assets, tax and pension.

These were considered central in the everyday life of same sex partners as they were for heterosexual couples. Authors also referred to fundamental universal human rights that the law provided. This is a characteristic example:

The legal draft has to do with the everyday life. It has to do with the right to love and cohabitation. It has to do with things [which are] given for us. Like inheritance. Insurance. With the right to live openly, without secrecies and without hiding. At the end of the day, the partnership agreement has to do with the right of our fellow humans to a normal life. (Philotheou, 2015, p.4)

In the extract above, inheritance and insurance are referenced together with the right to love and to form partnerships, which points to a human desire and need of recognition, rather than a strictly-speaking legal right. The demand for recognition, or, as mentioned, the right to live “openly”, has been central in same sex union demands (Weeks, 2004). It is more generally considered a central claim of contemporary identity politics (Taylor, 1992). The point here is that irrespective of one’s sexuality, the rights that people should enjoy are the same and they come down to the right to a “normal life”. The idea of “normality” has been a common frame in LGBT+ activist discourse (Richardson, 2004), emphasizing sameness between LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ in a quest for equality.

The right to individual privacy and freedom of choice were also central in the discussion over rights, as evident in the following extract:

Besides, the right to choose a partner and to form a marriage or a cohabitation agreement falls within the sphere of the private and constitutes a personal choice for every individual and in no case can it be limited by taboos and obsolete beliefs. On the contrary, it must be respected and protected. (Zero tolerance to diversity, 2012, p.39)

The right to privacy, included in the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), has been central in the justification of sexual rights globally (Richardson, 2017). Here, privacy is stressed along with individual choice. This appears to draw on a neoliberal ideological theme that emphasizes individualization and autonomy, in this case, the right of people to determine their own lives (Richardson, 2017). However, such emphasis on the individual often neglects sociocultural barriers to individual agency (Plummer, 2001). The author in the extract above refers somewhat dismissively to cultural beliefs that restrict individual autonomy (“taboos and obsolete beliefs”).

Similarly, another author locates the right of self-determination in the private sphere and specifically in the bedroom, through a rhetorical question: *“I ask a simple question: Is a person’s right to live the life he wants under restrictions and regulations in relation to his bedroom?”* (Dionysiou, 2015, p.7). The use of the term bedroom here is employed to support rights for sexual minorities in the private sphere, where the individual should be free of social constraints. Yet, arguments based on the right to privacy may hinder social transformation (Brickell, 2001; Stychin, 1998), because they emphasize individual conduct and interpersonal relations and reduce same sex relationships to sexual conduct. As such, they depoliticize LGBT+ identities and political struggles as matters of narrow personal significance. Here lies an interesting contradiction: sexuality in the extracts above is constructed as a private and personal matter, but also as a right that should be publicly recognized. This is an inherent contradiction of the concept of sexual citizenship that muddles the boundaries between the private and the public sphere (Weeks, 1998).

Authors drew also on the concept of human rights. For example, one article presented freedom of choice as *“an inalienable human right, protected by the constitution and the laws of Democracy but also by International Law”*

(Constantinou, 2014, p.10). The human rights argument is also evident in the extract below by the Commissioner for Human Rights:

[Voting for the CU law] also tests our dedication to fundamental principles of rule of law and of our judicial and legal civilization. The cultivation of a culture of acceptance and respect of diversity forms and strengthens a context of respect of rights of all the members of a society, without exception  
(Savidou, 2014, p.26)

Here, as in other contexts (Wilkinson, 2004), CU Law is framed in a way that places emphasis on sexuality rights that guarantee anti-discrimination and equal treatment. The phrases “rule of law” and “judicial and legal civilization” are used to demonstrate that civil union is an integral part of the legal system of a democratic state. Sexuality is discussed as a form of human diversity that should be accepted and respected. The extract above argues in favor of the law on the basis of respecting diversity, rather than on the basis of fundamental sameness between individuals, as observed in the previous extracts.

On the other end, authors against the CU law used rights arguments to suggest that LGBT+ rights claims represent an excessive request and therefore constitute unjustifiable preferential treatment. Interestingly, in contrast to the legal language employed by authors in favor, authors against the CU law politicized the issue.

We don't know whether our politicians got a whiff of votes, but we think that neither LGBT nor any other group of the population should have special rights, in addition to those of other citizens. If some chose to group themselves and subsequently to ask for special treatment from the state, this is their problem (ios, 2015, p.2)

The above extract diminishes the need for CU law by attributing it to political instrumentalism and suggesting that it constitutes special treatment for part of the population. Similarly, in the following extract, the author presents CU law as redundant because the existing constitution and legal system is already equally protecting human rights irrespective of sexuality. While the right to marriage is non-existent, this is not presented as a problem since existing law covers LGBT rights. Moreover, the inclusive pronoun “our” referring to “fellow-citizens”, is possibly used in the extract to avoid potential accusations of homophobia for opposing to CU law (c.f. Billig et al, 1988).

In the meantime, maybe the legislation for LGBT is extravagant, since both the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus and its law protect all human rights, including LGBT rights. Under this prism, no special legislation should be voted for our fellow citizens, specifically. Their rights, except marriage between homosexuals, already exist and were vested, like everybody's (Yannakos, 2015, p.7)

In the extract above, introducing a law to grant rights to same sex couples is constructed as excessive, unnecessary and as encouraging social fragmentation, thus, ultimately reducing equality. This is what Brickell (2001, p. 212) calls “the egalitarian myth” in LGBT debates, an argument that presents the homosexual citizen as already equal to the heterosexual, having therefore no basis upon which to claim additional rights. Interestingly, this argument as well as the argument of the second extract in the beginning of the section, which supports the law, are both built on the idea of sameness. In both cases, it is argued that either there is not or that there should not be any difference between LGBT+ and the rest of society in terms of their rights. Thus,

an equality argument is built on an idea of sameness to either support or oppose the legislation.

### ***Progress or threat?***

In this theme, the CU law symbolized, on the one hand, a much-needed progressive step towards modernization of the state and the society, and, on the other hand, a warning sign of imminent societal and national decline. In the following extract, the idea of progress is employed following the news that the European Court of Human Rights condemned another EU member-state, Greece, for excluding same sex couples from civil union. The author juxtaposes advanced countries, which endorsed CU rights, to backward states, like Cyprus and Greece, which, from an ethno-nationalist view, is seen as Cyprus' 'mother-land'.

Advanced countries of the planet have implemented this measure for legal recognition of their citizens at different levels. First: so that in case of death for example of one [partner] the other is protected and everything that they acquired together is not lost overnight. Cunning societies of the planet, societies of hypocrites who want to pass as advanced but remain deeply backwards, considering at times that they have to do with naïve partners in the EU or others, societies like the Greek or ours [...] these societies look always for the way they could fool others (Constantinou, 2013, p.13).

The author uses the right over a partner's property in case of death to demonstrate the need for legalizing same sex partnerships. Greece and Cyprus are constructed in depreciatory terms as being cunning, hypocritical, "backward" societies, trying to trick EU partners by not implementing relevant EU directives. This echoes Puar's (2007) concept of homonationalism, whereby sexual rights become a symbolic marker distinguishing between a supposedly superior and progressive West and an



inferior, backward Rest (Sabsay, 2012). In this case, the author speaks from an ‘enlightened’ personal position of tolerance and progress towards his own country, Cyprus. Therefore, this account does not entail a claim of national superiority over other nations (as is commonly seen in Orientalist discourse) but a claim of personal superiority towards Cypriot society, which is Orientalised as backward. It argues how, at least for some allegedly enlightened Cypriots, Europe would impose democratization and modernization over a backward country and recalcitrant people. Notably, imposition of progress in this context is seen as positive given that the naïve, hypocrite Cypriot subject has neither the agency nor the willingness to do so on its own. This reflects an anti-emancipatory, Orientalist logic, paradoxically, in the name of equality and freedom and a postcolonial suspicion not towards the external, powerful construct of the liberal West, as is the trend (see Kapoor 2002), but towards the internal backward subject that needs cultural discipline by superior Western democratic institutions.

In other extracts, the legislation was described as “*bold and progressive*” (NiHi, 2013, p.12) and a possible rejection by the national parliament as a “*spectacular backward jump*” (We should say the dogma-dogma and the law-law, 2015, p.13). Opposing such accounts was an argument that presented the legislation as an alarming threat to the future of society and the existence of the nation. The following extract presents same sex marriage as a national issue of concern because it relates to birth deficit:

With the cohabitation of heterosexual or homosexual couples I think no particular problem is posed. When, however, there is an issue of marriage contract between people of the same sex, I am under the impression that the issue exceeds the limits of institutional or legal procedures and becomes

national. And it becomes national because it has a direct relation to our survival as a national part of the Greek trunk. It is directly related to the birth deficit and to our survival in the island. “And what will happen if such a couple decides to adopt a child?” asked the Archbishop. Unnatural conditions, not tolerable by a rational person. Because if such a legislation is established, this will mean the collapse of the social fabric. Namely, the family. The family, which constitutes the cell of society. The society, which is the foundation of the motherland (Hatziantonis, 2013, p.8)

The author draws a distinction between cohabitation and marriage of same sex couples, identifying the latter as threatening the survival of the nation and showing a degree of tolerance to the former. This distinction parallels the distinction between private and public: the private area of cohabitation presents no significant threat, but the public legal recognition does. The author also makes a distinction between the legal and the national sphere, with which sexuality-based rights relate. Adoption of children by same sex couples, a right not provided by the specific law, is related to the national sphere and presented as unnatural and irrational. The account of this extract becomes progressively more ominous: adoption would lead to the destruction of the social fabric and of the institution of family, which, in turn, is seen as the fundamental core of society and, ultimately, of the nation.

The above catastrophic scenarios are taken as self-evident without an explanation of how same sex adoption can bring about such effects. Appeals to nature (O’Connor, 2017) are used together with appeals to rationality (i.e. reference to the “rational person”) in order to present this account as reasonable and thus not discriminatory (Billig et al, 1998). Clear links between nationalism and sexuality are drawn: The survival of the nation depends on giving birth and on the preservation of

the institution of the family, both constructed as exclusively heterosexual phenomena. By implication, the homosexual citizen is presented as threatening to the nation and the heterosexual as the prototype citizen (Canaday, 2011; Richardson, 2017). This is a nationalistic view, which sees reproductive heterosexuality as a bearer of national unity and survival, while alleged common descent is defining the boundaries of the national community (Kahlina, 2014).

Articles against the law also suggested that CU law and marriage were an unwelcome foreign influence, a type of cultural contamination (Bozatzi, 2009) by Europe and the West. This is in stark contrast to the supportive arguments that idealized Europe. They reflect disillusionment with European culture and practices, or Western cultural contamination, as evidenced in the phrase “European jumble” below:

We have entered the European jumble and together with all other bad [things]  
we want now to bring to Cyprus marriages among homosexuals  
(Papadopoulos, 2012, p.39)

Even more clearly, the following extract suggests the need to safeguard national ideals against adopting the moral deviations of Europe:

It is a pity for a nation who, with honesty and hard-work, ethos and dignity, bravery, opposed to so many conquerors throughout the centuries and retained intact its ideals, instead of assisting it to stand on its own feet, we create new problems [...] With such compromises and concessions, how high can we raise our heads and look Gregoris Afxentiou and Kyriacos Matsis in the eyes? The heroes, the martyrs of Faith and Nation of that wonderful Fight of the 55-59, how proud can they feel when they see us from above copying faithfully both the letter and the spirit of wrong decisions and moral deviations of a staggering Europe and instead of leading ahead by promoting the right [thing]

we follow by choosing the wrong [thing] and by fitting it with ease to our own measures (Christophidis, 2014, p.23)

In the above extract, a series of positive national values are exposed and praised through appeals to historical national fights and hardships. It references Greek-Cypriot heroes, members of the right-wing anti-colonial movement EOKA, who, in a way, represent the ‘proper’ national heterosexual subject as opposed to the contemporary Cypriot subject that is contaminated by the amorality of Europe. A parallel is drawn between the moral integrity of past struggles (e.g. national liberation and union with Greece) and contemporary sexual citizenship demands, which are constructed as both morally dubious and at odds with Cypriot ideals. The problem for the nation is a moral one in this account: the legislation is constructed as a concession to the directives of a morally corrupt Europe, and adopting it is seen as disgracing and disrespectful towards the nation’s brave ancestors who fought for worthy national struggles. Appeals to history are powerful semantic tools legitimizing inclusion or exclusion to citizenship rights to migrants (Kadianaki, Andreouli & Carretero, 2018), but herein they legitimize exclusion of non-heterosexual ‘citizens’ from citizenship rights. In effect, historical figures are used to suggest that the nation should remain heterosexual, as it has always been, and thus prove morally superior to the European paradigm.

Overall, on the one hand, rights to civil union were constructed in our data as an indispensable part of modernity, a leap that Cyprus society and state need to make in order to be confirmed as part of the ‘developed’ world. On the other end, legalization of same sex partnership was presented as a form of European cultural pollution that leads to moral decline and threatens national existence.

## **Dilemmas of sexual citizenship**

Our analysis of media representations of Civil Union law in Greek Cypriot newspapers revealed two main themes around which the debate of CU revolved: universal rights versus special rights, and progress versus threat. We argue that these themes reflect two ideological streams that contain oppositional elements, namely two ideological dilemmas from which they draw (Billig, 1987). One dilemma is around universalism versus particularism and another around Occidentalism versus Orientalism.

With regards to the first dilemma, the findings tap into the idea of universality of citizenship and of universal human rights, as it appears in liberal political thought (Young, 1989). It advocates that all citizens should enjoy full citizenship status and be equal, but equality is understood as equality-as-sameness, that is, all citizens are the same and, thus, equal. This universalism reinforces a diversity-blind perspective and a homogenous view of society that conceals the particularities of different social groups. This argument was endorsed by both favourable and unfavourable authors towards CU. Authors in favour appealed to universal human rights or to the quest for a normal life, irrespective of sexual orientation. Affirming difference or arguing for particularism under this ideological prism would violate the equality-as-sameness norm.

On the other hand, particularistic appeals were made when authors affirmed the need for respect of diversity and respect of privacy. Considering sexual rights as rights to privacy promotes an idea of citizenship as securing particular private interests (Young, 1989), as opposed to universal rights. Some authors in favour of the law, in making particularistic arguments, also spoke about public recognition of diversity and the right to live openly. These findings point to the interesting

contradiction between the private and the public that sexual citizenship brings forth (Weeks, 1998). The right to privacy restricts same sex relations to the private sphere, but it is also part of universal human rights conventions.

This dilemma of universalism and privacy versus public recognition of difference reflects ideas that are prevalent in most liberal Western societies in debates around LGBT+ rights. These debates evoke concepts of human rights (Ammaturo, 2015), privacy (Weeks, 1998) and diversity. In this sense, it reflects a dilemma that is not exclusive to Cyprus, or even to the specific topic of LGBT+ rights but is widely found in understandings of diversity (Iatridis, 2019) and various minority rights claims (Brickell, 2001; Young, 1989). Within feminist debates, for example, the tension between equality-as-sameness and equality-as-difference create an impossible choice for feminists, because both exposing and ignoring difference may perpetuate inequality (Scott, 1988). Thus, both universalistic and particularistic claims can potentially enable LGBT+ rights recognition, but they are also politically risky. If difference is pronounced to secure rights, then a potential challenge is that the minority group is essentialised and differences are reified or that these rights are seen as special, excessive rights that violate the equality as sameness norm (Young, 1989). If difference is brushed aside in order to argue for universal human rights, then this may mask the particular concerns of minority groups and further their marginalisation. The tension between particular and universal rights consists therefore a central political challenge for sexual citizenship struggles.

The second dilemma, reflected in the theme of progress versus threat, is one between Orientalism and Occidentalism. The two concepts are dialectically defined. Orientalism is a system of knowledge, stemming from the history of colonialism, which essentialises the East and the non-Western world (the Rest), more broadly, as

backwards and uncivilised (Said, 1995). Occidentalism, as its mirror theme, essentialises the West as progressive (Bozatzi, 2009). These are representations that demarcate hierarchical evaluations and positions of power in the world system, with the West occupying a superior position, as the locus of modernity and progress (Coronil, 1996). However, research shows that opposing discourses of the West exist, as materialist, unspiritual and undermining of traditional values (Buruma & Margalit, 2004) or as polluted by multiculturalism (Andreouli, Figgou, Kadianaki, Sapountzis & Xenitidou, 2017).

Orientalist and Occidental themes were evident in the data in the homonationalist discourse that criticised Cypriots as backwards against the progressive West and specifically Europe (see also Mepschen, Duyvendak & Tonkens, 2010; Puar, 2007; Sabsay, 2012). In these accounts, Europe was represented as the civilized, modern 'other' (Amin 2009) versus the primitive, traditional self. As in other European contexts, sexual rights were thus instrumentalised to demarcate the boundaries between progressive and backwards states (Ammaturo, 2015). However, contrary to other contexts, homonationalist discourse was employed to position Cyprus as striving for modernity and Europeanization. On the other hand, an oppositional representation of Europe was employed against the CU, one of a morally declining Europe, whose example was to be avoided. Sexual rights were associated with a threatening cultural contamination from the West and particularly from Europe. Threat was justified on the basis of a heteronormative understanding of the family and the construction of the citizen and the national community as exclusively heterosexual. The threat was constructed as both realistic and tangible (Stephan & Stephan, 1996), proclaiming a fear of extinction of the nation because of low birth rates, a threat augmented because of the ethnic division in the country. But it was also

symbolic, as a moral devaluation of Cypriot society because of the domination of immoral same sex relations. Therefore, civil union was delegitimized as incompatible with a heterosexual, glorious nation. Thus, within this second dilemma, what is at stake in debating sexual citizenship rights is the particular position of Cyprus as a state in the modern world. LGBT+ rights are enabled and constrained by particular visions of progress and conservatism that are considered as ideal in particular for Greek-Cypriots.

To sum up, the study of traditional media through a critical psychological approach revealed, in this particular context, that sexual citizenship is by no means consensual, but it is constructed, negotiated and contested. These debates are anchored in two core ideological dilemmas, universalism versus particularism and Orientalism versus Occidentalism. Both dilemmas reflect avenues for recognition of sexual citizenship rights on the basis of respect of human rights, equality, diversity and progress, albeit with certain caveats based on liberal assumptions. Both dilemmas also show that recognition of LGBT+ citizenship is undermined by heteronormative understandings of the family and the nation and particular visions of morality that marginalize LGBT+ communities.

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